



**TESTIMONY OF PET INDUSTRY JOINT ADVISORY COUNCIL  
BEFORE JOINT COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT  
Senate Bill 253**

**March 7, 2011**

The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) enjoyed the privilege of testifying before this committee last year in favor of House Bill 5368, establishing requirements for the import of dogs and cats into Connecticut.

As this committee is aware, PIJAC has a long history of advocating for a responsible pet trade, as well as supporting appropriate standards in law. We have supported the establishment of reasonable licensure and regulation of pet stores, appropriate standards of care for companion animals, and warranty requirements for pet stores in the state.

There have long been requirements in place for animals being brought into Connecticut for resale by pet stores. But as we noted last year, a critical piece of the regulatory puzzle for dogs and cats that was missing was a mechanism for ensuring humane treatment and public health relative to dogs and cats imported into the state and destined for somewhere other than pet stores. House Bill 5368 was adopted specifically to fill that gap in the law.

Senate Bill 253, currently before this committee, would repeal substantive requirements of last year's legislation to the detriment of the public. Prior to adoption of HB 5368, there was no oversight or control of dogs and cats imported into Connecticut by rescue or humane organizations. These organizations are not subject to health certificate and other requirements applicable to dogs and cats that are imported for resale to pet shops.

Animals imported from other states, or even other countries, may serve as vectors for rabies and other diseases injurious to other pets and to the people of Connecticut. This is precisely the reason why the new requirements for animal importers were codified into law. The amendments proposed by SB 253 threaten to defeat the very purpose of such law. Specifically, this bill would strike in its entirety the provision mandating that dogs and cats undergo a veterinary examination upon being brought into the state.

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To be sure, the bill would retain a requirement that such animals undergo an examination prior to sale or adoption, an important requirement. But the requirement to have the examination take place within a specified time period upon import, a vital element of the law, is eliminated entirely. Thus, the state's interest in ensuring that dogs and cats imported into Connecticut are not bringing in diseases injurious to the public would no longer be served under the proposed legislation.

Likewise, by exempting from the definition of an animal importer any person who brings a dog or cat into the state for sale or adoption "after such dog or cat enters the state" SB 253 would create a huge loophole that would permit organizations to escape the requirements of the bill without providing the state any assurance whatsoever that the animal is free from disease. Such organizations would be free to import dogs and cats, free from any requirements or restrictions, simply by claiming that the animal was already pledged to a prospective pet owner.

Again, the interest of the state is wholly defeated. Indeed, in such cases, other provisions of the law requiring a veterinary examination prior to sale or adoption would no longer even apply. Thus, animals imported pursuant to this loophole would never be required to undergo a veterinary examination at all. The essential purpose of HB 5368 will have been completely undermined.

PIJAC believes that this committee fulfilled a critical public policy need when it facilitated enactment of legislation ensuring that diseased dogs and cats are not routinely brought into Connecticut to be offered as pets to the public. We respectfully urge that the committee not obviate this extremely beneficial policy by eliminating the veterinary examination requirement that serves as its basis.

If, after the policy has been allowed to operate effectively, there proves the need to marginally modify the law in order to accommodate important exceptions, that opportunity will be available next legislative session. This bill, however, goes much further than creating a marginal exception; it would eviscerate the point of the law altogether.

PIJAC thanks the committee for of its consideration of our concerns.